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ABSTRACT

A study sought to identify personality factors associated with high levels of performance in collegiate football. A sample of 272 football players who were attending three southeastern United States universities took the "16 Personality Factor Questionnaire" prior to the season's first game. Analysis of responses and players' athletic performances indicated that 3 of the 16 personality traits--group dependence, tough-mindedness, and extroversion--were significant predictors of athletic performance. Although this finding is consistent with personality trait theory, more research is needed with situational and behavioral theories in various sport populations to identify which of these factors are associated with athletic performance. (CB)

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Personality and Success in Intercollegiate Football

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Personality and Success in Intercollegiate Football

The role personality may play in athletic performance has been of interest to sport psychologists for decades. Research has sought to obtain accurate and reliable information about the dynamics of personality which may facilitate or undermine athletic performance. While the sport personality research is prolific (Ruffer, 1975, 1976a, 1976b), few studies have examined the personality characteristics associated with high levels of performance in collegiate football. The primary focus of personaltiy studies in collegiate football has been identifying personality characteristics which differentiate college football players from non-athletes (Aamodt, Alexander, & Kimbrough, 1982; LeUnes & Nation, 1982; Nation & LeUnes, 1983).

The purpose of the present study was to identify personality factors associated with high levels of performance in collegiate football.

Method

Subjects

The sample consisted of 272 collegiate football players, who were attending three southeastern United States universities. After consultation with several collegiate football coaches, an athletic performance continuum was established to differentiate the

players into three separate categories, each varying in the degree of athletic success. The players were identified as Regulars (N = 101), Substitutes (N = 94), and Survivors (N = 77) based on the following criteria:

1. Regulars--Those players who regularly started and/or played 50% or more of the time during at least half of the games throughout the season.

2. Substitutes--Those players who started and/or played less that 50% of the time during the games throughout the season.

3. Survivors--Those players who did not play during the season, except for acknowledgement purposes (i.e., playing the last few plays of a game in which the outcome is not in question).

Measures

16 Personality Factor Questionnaire. The 16 PF is bi-polar in nature, having a low- and a high-score description for each trait. Form C was used due to the necessity of a built-in Motivational Distortion scale to evaluate and correct for faking good, faking bad, and random answering. The development of the 16PF and it's psychometric properties are fully elaborated by Cattell, Eber, and Tatsuoka (1982).

Procedure

Prior to the first game of the regular season, the football players were assembled and informed consent forms and the 16 PF were administered. At

the conclusion of the season, coaches grouped their players into the three athletic performance categories (Regulars, Substitutes, and Survivors) based on the previously established criteria, and provided this information to the present investigator.

Results and Discussion

A maximum R-square multiple stepwise regression analysis (SAS Institute, 1982) was used to determine the extent to which athletic performance could be predicted by a linear combination of the regressor variables. The results, presented in Table 1, indicate that three of the sixteen personality traits, group-dependence, tough-mindedness, and extroversion were found to be significant predictors of athletic performance in collegiate football, accounting for approximately 28 percent of the total variance, $F(3, 268) = 34.60$, $p<.0001$. Several studies (Kane, 1980; Morgan & Costill, 1972; Morgan & Johnson, 1978; Morgan & Pollock, 1977; Ogilvie, 1968; Williams & Parkin, 1980) have supported the significant contribution of these three personality traits to high levels of athletic performance.

The cumulative change in R^2 (represented by ΔR^2 in Table 1), from the initial r^2 of group-dependence, increased significantly from .17 to .28, $F(2, 268) = 20.37$, $p<.0001$, indicating a reliable increase in the variance accounted for in athletic performance, by

the progressive inclusion of the significant personality factors. Examination of the beta weights show that group-dependence was the most important contributor to performance, accounting for approximately 17 percent of the total variance. The remaining thirteen personality factors were not significant.

Insert Table 1 about here

The present study is consistent with personality trait theory. Trait theory conceptualizes personality as a collection of traits or factors, which exert widely generalized causal effects on behavior. However, a strict trait theory approach should be used with caution, due to the additional influence of various mediating variables. A greater proportion of the actual behavior can be explained when personality traits are used along with variables such as coach and leader behaviors, type of sport, and level of competition. Research is needed with situational-behavioral theories in various sport populations to identify situational and behavioral factors associated with athletic performance.

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Table 1

Multiple Stepwise Regression of Personality Factors on Performance Levels

				Final Step	
Variables	R	R^2	ΔR^2	B	F
Group-dependence	.41	.17		-.260	20.23***
Tough-mindedness	.49	.24	.07	-.190	9.82**
Extroversion	.53	.28	.04	.160	7.55*

Note. The R and R^2 entries for group-dependence represent simple r and r^2. The negative beta weights for group-dependence and tough-mindedness reflect the low end of the 16PF bi-polar scale.
*p<.01. **p<.005. ***p<.0001.